

# Liaison

## Library Association News-Sheet

News Editors: R. G. Surridge and D. R. Jamieson

April 1959

## ACTION ON MORE CUT-PRICE JOBS GETS SOME SUCCESS

### Lending Librarian and Branch Supervisor at West Bromwich

Chartered Librarians were invited to apply for the above posts, both graded at A.P.T. I (£575—725), in the *T.L.S.* dated 2nd January. The Lending Librarian supervises a staff of seven other whole-time assistants and the Branch Supervisor five. On 5th January the Secretary wrote to the Town Clerk stating that in the opinion of the Council both posts were beyond the level of those graded at A.P.T. I by the N.J.C. and accordingly **they should be graded not less than A.P.T. II.** A notice was inserted in the *T.L.S.* inviting candidates to communicate with the Secretary. Those who did were informed of the representations made to the employing authority and were advised not to apply until a decision had been reached.

In his reply the Town Clerk said that recent information obtained from 20 other County boroughs in the population group 70,000 to 110,000 showed that corresponding posts in these authorities were graded at A.P.T. I. The Secretary challenged these gradings and stated that according to the Association's information, there are 43 library authorities (excluding Metropolitan Boroughs) in that population range, only six of which have Lending Librarians supervising a staff of seven. Of these one was graded in A.P.T. III, four in A.P.T. II and one in A.P.T. I.

The Secretary also drew attention to the new N.J.C. "award" which was agreed on 21st January and requested that it be applied to both posts. The Town Clerk replied that the salaries of both posts had been reconsidered in the light of the new award and that **his Council had agreed to re-grade them to A.P.T. II** from 1st April. Amended advertisements have since been published.

### Borough Librarian, Port Talbot

In the *T.L.S.* for 23rd January applications for the above vacancy were invited from persons who have passed the Final examination of the Library Associa-

tion. The salary was in accordance with Grade A.P.T. II-III (£725—1,025). In accordance with the Council's policy at that time relating to inadequately graded posts for Chief Librarians, the Secretary protested against the grading, informing the Town Clerk that no other library authority in England and Wales of comparable population and service placed the Chief Librarian on a commencing salary as low as £725 per annum. **The average salary for such posts is within A.P.T. IV (£1,025—1,175).** He also drew attention to the recent N.J.C. A.P.T. II "award" for subordinate library staff and requested the employing authority to revise the salary to a more appropriate level.

A notice was inserted in the following issue of the *T.L.S.* inviting intending candidates to communicate with the Secretary. Those who did were informed of the action taken and advised not to apply or to withdraw their applications until the Association's representations had been considered and a decision on the salary reached. Similar action was taken by the S.M.C.C.L. On 5th March the Town Clerk, in response to a request for information on the action taken by his Council, stated that **an appointment had been made at a salary in accordance with A.P.T. III (£845—1,025) commencing at £915.**

# TECHNICALITIES

A Rockefeller grant of £4,820 to the University College of N. Wales is to be used, *inter alia*, for the purchase of journals for the Department of Zoology.

## RAND CORPORATION PUBLICATIONS

The Rand Corporation has presented to the Science Museum Library, as a national deposit collection for Great Britain, a set of nearly 1,000 of their research publications. These range through mathematics, physics, electronics, aeronautics, economics, and the social and political sciences.

They are now available, on loan to all registered borrowers from the Science Museum Library, and to anyone as photocopies through the Science Museum Library Photocopy Service.

The Index to the Rand Corporation Publications is held at the Science Museum Library, but is not for loan. Copies of the Index have also been deposited in the larger university libraries of Great Britain.

The U.S. Office of Technical Services is responsible for two important ventures in the translations field. *Technical Translations* is published fortnightly by the O.T.S., as a successor to the former *Translation Monthly*, and this lists and abstracts "translated material available from U.S. Government sources, co-operating foreign governments, Aslib and the American Special Libraries Association, and others". The subscription is \$16.00. At the beginning of this year the Office of Technical Services began publishing **translated abstracts of 141 Russian scientific journals**. It is hoped to learn more about this service later, but meanwhile some further information may be obtained from the Lending Library Unit of D.S.I.R.

The 3rd edition of Unesco's *Bibliography of interlingual scientific and technical dictionaries*, published in 1953, is now exhausted and completion of the manuscript for the fourth edition has been delayed by the receipt of numerous new references, especially to Russian dictionaries, at the moment when it was almost ready for printing. These are now being incorporated and the new edition—greatly enlarged—should appear later in 1959.

Spring, 1959, will see the first issue of the *Journal of Nuclear Materials*, which is intended as an international vehicle for articles "of high scientific and technical value in the field of metallurgy, ceramics, and solid state physics in the atomic energy industry". It will be quarterly, published by North-Holland Publishing Co. at £6 10s. od. a year.

Chelmsford have plans for establishing a Technical Library in the autumn, and for appointing a Technical Librarian in charge of this new service. A suggestion that half of the present Reading Room be given over to this purpose (see March *Liaison*) has been further considered and adopted.

Advice was given by Wiltshire County Library to the Westinghouse Brake and Signal Co. Ltd., of Chippenham, on the organization of a technical information, abstracting and book service. The firm were planning to build a new library and it was hoped that its facilities would be of use beyond its own works.

TALIC. In connection with this new information service on Tyneside, Newcastle City Libraries have issued the first of what will be a series of quarterly bulletins of new publications on science, technology and business management. Only a few copies now remain.

## PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGE SCIENCE LIBRARY

The Council of the Senate of Cambridge University has put forward a scheme to establish a science library, as an offspring of the University Library, on a central site near the laboratories, to incorporate the present library of the Philosophical Society and scientific books and periodicals from the University Library, which is too far away to be convenient for scientists.

The present time is appropriate, since the University Library is reaching the limit of its capacity, the Philosophical Library is greatly overcrowded and certain non-scientific faculties and departments now in the main laboratory area are due for removal in the foreseeable future to the Sidgwick Avenue site.

The Marshall Library, with the museum and premises now allotted to the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology on the north-west corner of the Downing site, would be a possible location.

# WALES and THE ROBERTS REPORT

*Mr. L. Gardner, Borough Librarian of Rhondda, South Wales, writes—*

*Liaison* has seen fit to make a summary of the findings of the Roberts Report. Apparently it feels that there are many in our profession who are either unable to or unwilling to study in full so important a document, which, if acted upon, will certainly and considerably change the look of libraries throughout the country and their own professional prospects during the next decade.

Having decided that a summary of this report was necessary, surely this should have been accurate. It is with horror, therefore, that I read the summary of the Report's findings of the position in Wales. One can perhaps excuse the newspapers for having misread the report, but not surely the anonymous summarizers of it in our professional journal. I refer to the statement that "no single Library Authority in Wales in 1957-58 spent as much on books as the £5,000 which the Committee suggested was the minimum to justify autonomy". A little less haste on the part of the writer and a little more care in reading the report would assure him that there were eight Authorities which spent more than £5,000 in Wales, some considerably more, and have been doing so for very many years. If the writer will take the trouble to re-read the relevant paragraph he will find that the report says that "only two Libraries spent 2s. 6d. or more and only seven spent 2s. or more, and that none of these spent on books as much as the figure of £5,000 a year, suggested as a minimum necessity". The position in Wales is bad enough but let us at least be accurate in our facts—or are Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire counties, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Rhondda, no longer in Wales?

For your information, Messrs. Editors, Rhondda will next year be spending on books at least £11,200, which, on a population of 107,000, according to my reckoning will be over 2s. per head. This has been achieved irrespective of the Roberts Report, which has not yet been considered by my Committee.

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The Editors very much regret the omission of certain words from their summary of the Report, an omission which had the unfortunate effect of misrepresenting the position obtaining in Wales. The correct position is as stated by Mr. Gardner, and for this purpose we are glad to reproduce his letter in full.

In explanation—though not in excuse—we would say that if the time between the publication of the Report and the date by which *Liaison* had to reach the printers had led to "a little less haste" on the part of the Editors, then the omission would very likely not have occurred.

Mr. Gardner's was the only letter to reach us on this topic. Nevertheless, in taking a critical view of the use we made of our editorial freedom in treating the Roberts Report as we did, Mr. Gardner need not necessarily be in a one-man minority and may well be representing a wider-held view. Was a summary called for? Or was it superfluous, and consequently a gratuitous insult to imply that "there are many in our profession who are either unable to or unwilling to study in full so important a document"?

The publication of the Roberts Report was *news* and it seemed unquestionably the business of *Liaison*, as a news-sheet, to cover the Report in some suitable way. The manner of this had, naturally,

to be decided in outline some while before the Report finally appeared. The one important factor which was unknown until the last moment was the date on which the Report was to be presented to Parliament and, in consequence, the time that would be left before *Liaison's* press date. When this relatively short interval became known the Editors chose to keep to their idea of publishing a summary, in the belief that this would be in the hands of every member of the Association sooner than they—juniors and seniors alike—could all have had an opportunity to study a copy of the Report itself.

Perhaps this was wrong; certainly, had this been the sole consideration then Mr. Gardner's letter might have persuaded us that, on reflection, it was a wrong decision. But *Liaison* is also intended to reach that sizeable proportion of the Association's members who are serving in industrial, university, governmental and many types of library other than public; and abroad as well as in the U.K. In our view there was sufficient justification in this factor alone for treating the Report as we did.

In his letter Mr. Gardner speaks of "the anonymous summarizers". The Editors are ultimately responsible for everything that is published unsigned in this news-sheet, so that a question of anonymity does not arise.



# PUBLIC LIBRARY GRADINGS

## *Aftermath of the Award      The Nalگو Conference*

Correspondence and resolutions from Nalگو Branches, L.A. Branches and Sections, Library Staff Associations and members of the Association, which were presented to the L.A. Membership Committee at its meeting on the 2nd April, revealed that the recent N.J.C. award to librarians in local authorities was meeting the most bitter and scathing criticism yet encountered in the history of negotiation for improved conditions for librarians.

Encouraged by the strength of this reaction the committee had a lengthy discussion on possible lines of action.

### **A.A.L. Petition**

Mr. J. H. Jones, A.A.L. Secretary, informed the committee of action that his Association was taking independently. Letters have been sent to its representatives throughout the country urging members to take appropriate action through their local Nalگو branches. Stress was placed on reopening negotiations on the basis of work, responsibilities and qualifications of professional staff. Full use should be made of the new impetus given to our case by the recommendations of the Roberts Report regarding staffing.

With each letter the A.A.L. has enclosed a petition to the Secretary of Nalگو which it is hoped will be signed not only by every public library member of Nalگو but by all non-librarian members of Nalگو who agree with our case. As Mr. Jones commented: "At this stage the A.A.L. has taken all the direct action that it can . . . it is now up to each member."

### **New Grading Proposals**

The new Chairman of the Membership Committee, Mr. E. A. Hinton, has quickly come forward with a series of proposals for a new approach to the grading structure in public libraries. These have as their basis qualifications and positions held, and it would appear that they would be considerably assisted if the Council approves, and individual libraries implement, the recom-

mendations of the committee which is dealing with designation of library posts. The Membership Committee considers this an urgent matter and will be dealing with it at its next meeting.

There was a general discussion on the desirability of the formation of a Trade Union for Chartered Librarians following a request for an investigation along these lines from the A.A.L. This matter is now referred to the Executive Committee.

## **NALGO CONFERENCE**

**Scarborough 9th-13th June, 1959**

Two motions on the preliminary agenda of this conference which directly affect gradings for librarians appear in the April issue of *Public Service*. The Membership Committee found itself in complete support of both motions and directed that **a letter be sent to all public libraries drawing the attention of Nalگو members to these motions** and urging that Nalگو departmental representatives seek the maximum support for them in their local branch.

Members of the Association of Assistant Librarians who were present at this meeting indicated that action by the A.A.L. was under consideration, one idea being a parade of librarians through the streets of Scarborough.

In the course of the Nalگو Conference at Scarborough, it is proposed to hold an informal meeting of librarian delegates to discuss matters affecting library staffs throughout the country.

Librarian delegates are therefore invited to write to Mr. Sleightholm, at 619 Stonegate Road, Moortown, Leeds 17, so that nearer the time they may be informed of the arrangements for the meeting.

## L.A.'s HONOURS LIST

**Mr. B. S. Page, M.A., Librarian of the Brotherton Library, Leeds, has been nominated as President of the Library Association for 1960.**

Two revered figures of the Association were elected as Honorary Fellows. One was Mr. J. D. Stewart, a senior statesman of the L.A., to whom we referred in our February issue when the London and Home Counties Branch instituted a Travelling Bursary in his name for outstanding service.

Mr. P. S. J. Welsford, retiring Secretary of the L.A. was also accorded this honour. At an informal gathering the night before Council, tributes were paid to Mr. Welsford for his continuous and devoted work for the Association, from officers of the Council, members of the Chaucer House staff, librarians from all kinds of libraries, and it was a pleasure to see eminent retired librarians like Mr. Sharp (Croydon) and Mr. Benson Thorne (Poplar) present at this ceremony to add their good wishes. The tribute took tangible form in the presentation of a sizeable cheque to Mr. Welsford from librarians all over the world. Contributions to this gift are in fact still arriving from practically every part of the globe.

The Presidential Nomination Sub-Committee is to make an annual review of the election of Honorary Fellows and Honorary Vice-Presidents. Any suggestions that are made will be remitted to that sub-committee for consideration.

## Why No Comment?

Mr. E. A. Hinton injected a note of criticism at the Council by asking why no responsible informed comment had been provided officially by the L.A. over correspondence that had recently appeared in *The Times*. He wanted to ensure that when important subjects such as the Roberts Report were under debate in the press official replies would be forthcoming, and not be left to comments by individual librarians. Mr. Hinton was not satisfied by the reply and stated that he felt free to raise the matter again.

## And a Commentary . . .

This motion from the A.A.L. Council was considered by the Executive Committee:

"That when consideration is given to the further changes and developments which are required in the Executive of the Library Association, the A.A.L. urges the L.A. to formulate an active public relations policy, and to make all the necessary arrangements for its implementation both by the Secretariat and by the employment of a professional expert."

The suggestion was referred to the Office Reorganization Sub-Committee.

## PUBLICATIONS

A cumulation of the first 13 numbers of the *Index to Select British Educational Periodicals*, covering the period 1954 to November, 1958, is to be published. This *Index* is compiled jointly by the Librarians of the Institutes of Education and covers about 50 educational periodicals. It is hoped that its publication by the L.A. will increase the usefulness of the *Index* to librarians and teachers generally.

The next *Special Subject List* (No. 30) will be devoted to *Handicapped children in Britain* and has been compiled by Mrs. W. A. Axford. It will run to about 56 printed pages, but will be available at the usual price of 2s. 6d. to those who have standing orders for the *Special Subject Lists*. Others will have to pay 4s. per copy, but there will be a discount of 10 per cent on orders for 20 copies and over.

Estimates for *Subject Catalogues: headings and structure*, by E. J. Coates and the *Literature of the social sciences* by P. R. Lewis, have been accepted, and the works are to be put in hand.

Careful consideration is being given to our form of Royalty Agreement with authors of L.A. publications, and it is proposed that, in future, authors of books published by the L.A. should be given the opportunity of choosing between a Royalty Agreement and receiving a lump sum from the Association in exchange for the copyright of their book.

The L.A. Carnegie Medal for 1958 will be awarded to Ann Philippa Pearce for *Tom's midnight garden* (O.U.P.), and an article on the award will appear in the next issue of the *Record*. No award of the *Kate Greenaway Medal* will be made for 1958, since no artist within the terms of the award was considered to have produced work during the year of sufficiently high standard.

## Just Published

*Statistics of Public Libraries in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1957-58*, price 7s. 6d. (postage 2d.).  
*Library Association Yearbook 1959*, price 15s. to members (21s. non-members) (postage 6d.).

## Pamphlet on Building

It is intended to produce a 16-page pamphlet on public library building standards. The aim is to encourage authorities to build new libraries and make appropriate alterations to existing ones. It is proposed to include several colour illustrations. Copies are to be sent to every library authority. The total cost should not be more than £500.

# OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD

Chartered Librarians in U.K. are reminded that the LA/NYLA Exchange scheme, which provides for British and American librarians to exchange posts and salaries for one year, is always available to those wanting experience in a library within New York State. Full details of the scheme were printed in the *Record* in May, 1953. Offers from American librarians are announced regularly in these columns or in the *Record*. Offers from British librarians can be made at any time to the Secretary from whom application forms are available. *The following opportunities are available now.*

## Brooklyn P.L., New York

Mr. Fauntleroy Gee, a young negro Branch librarian wishes to exchange his post for one year as soon as possible. *Duties:* adult reference work, young adult work, book selection, etc. *Salary:* approx. \$4,000 per annum. Applicants must be Chartered Librarians with a salary not less than £725 per annum. Further particulars and application forms from the Secretary of the Library Association.

## State University Teachers' College, New Paltz, New York

Mr. R. P. Lang, Librarian of this College, wishes to exchange with a British librarian, preferably in the South of England, in a similar post or in a University or Institute of Education library for one year from September, 1959, or part year from February, 1960. The British librarian would hold the post of Assistant Librarian. *Salary:* approx. \$6,500. *Duties:* general development of book collection and service to students and faculty, with possibility of developing own interests. Applicants should be Chartered Librarians with a salary of not less than £1,000 per annum. Further particulars and application forms from the Secretary of the Library Association.

## Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Miss Elizabeth A. Alexander wishes to exchange her post for one year in September, 1959. The College is a Teacher training college and the British librarian would have faculty status as an assistant librarian. *Duties:* to catalogue and process books and supervise student assistants, administer periodicals collection and quarterly bulletin of acquisitions. *Salary:* \$4,000 for the College year plus luncheon on class days. Interested members, who should be Chartered Librarians holding a similar post, should write direct to Miss Alexander, Lesley College Library, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## Haverford Men's College, Pennsylvania, Ladies Please Apply

This College wishes to appoint a young trained librarian with skill in cataloguing during the year. Haverford is a small men's college (450 students) near Philadelphia. The library has a collection of about 200,000 vols. and a staff of eleven. Applicants, preferably women, should write direct to the Librarian, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa., U.S.A.

## Exchange and Internships in Australia

The Library Association of Australia has set up an Exchange of Librarians Information Committee to advise and assist overseas librarians seeking exchange or intern positions in Australian libraries. Interested librarians in the United Kingdom are invited to apply to the Committee for details of posts available and for application forms. Letters should be sent by air mail to the Convener of the Committee, c/o Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, Carlton N.3, Victoria, Australia.

We are asked to inform members in the United Kingdom that if they go to Australia to work for two years, they can go as assisted migrants.

## Ottawa P.L., Canada

Mr. Donald G. Mutch, an assistant in the Business and Trade section of Ottawa Public Library, wishes to exchange his post for a year from mid-September, 1959. The section, which is new, has a reference and circulating stock of 2,700 vols., 75 periodicals, files of clippings, reports, etc. covering economics, trade, advertising, selling, finance, insurance, real estate, etc. Applicants, who should be graduates and/or Chartered Librarians with appropriate experience, should write direct to Mr. Mutch at 103 Blackburn Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

## Toronto Public Library—Internships

Attention is drawn to the offer of several internships, details of which were announced in the *Record*, for March, p. 70.



## BRIEFLY

"Only one thing worse than living in a world of absolutes is living in a world of relatives." (Mr. J. Wilkie at the L.A. Council.)

An O. and M. investigation into **Wandsworth** Public Libraries has found that no further economies can be made there without lowering the standard of the service to the public, "and the methods employed are some of the most modern and up to date in our experience". One of the few recommendations the investigators make is that the libraries be established as a separate department of the Council; other recommendations suggest changes in the grading, designation and salary scale of two officers.

The **Manchester** O. & M. Unit is recommending changes in the libraries and welfare services which will save £10,000 a year. When two senior officers in the libraries department retire the posts are to be abolished. Reductions in routine work are also recommended.

To celebrate its first "birthday", the Saturday morning Junior Library Club at **Malden** (Surrey) put on a production of *The Man from Algebratoun*, a play by Mr. S. C. Dedman, Borough Librarian of Godalming. Since Christmas the average attendance on Saturdays has been 56 children.

Expelled for failing to register books taken from the Library, a woman student at Edinburgh University has now had her punishment reduced to one of rustication until 1st January, 1960.

The fact that **Altofts** library (Yorks.) is located in a cemetery is thought to account for a decline in the number of books issued there.

Cathedral Library at **Chelmsford**, founded nearly 300 years ago, became open to the public in February. Members may borrow 3 books at a time for a month, but pre-1800 books and manuscripts will not be available. The library is devoted principally to theology and Essex history.

A correspondent in a Cambridge paper describes how, after attempts to purchase a copy of a play had failed, the local Branch Library obtained a typescript from the author within a fortnight.

For a test period of six months **Lambeth** are to suspend the practice of half-day closing on Wednesdays, and will remain open all day on that day.

The **L.A. Library** is to remain open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

The scarcity of books published in Welsh was deplored by Mr. A. Dickman, County Librarian of Pembrokeshire, at a meeting recently of the Wales and Monmouthshire Branch of the L.A. An all-time record of 20,000 books were published by British firms during 1957, but of this number less than 100 were in Welsh.

The plan for building a new central library in Bradford, at a cost of over half-a-million pounds, (noted in the *March Liaison*) has been deferred.

Reflecting on the plan to build a new central library at **Luton**, a correspondent in a local newspaper urges that the building should be surmounted by a dome visible from the streets: "A flattened dome, ribbed like a scallop-shell," to be made of "copper that will soon oxidize to a pale green. Such a dome," the writer goes on, "could have individuality and could help to make the building one of the outstanding ones of this age."

**Birmingham** employ the method of a "restricted list" for certain books considered unsuitable for issue to young people under sixteen. Anything on the "restricted list" is in the catalogue and can be obtained on demand. "They are on the shelves," it was stated, "but are marked and the staff will not issue any of them to children under sixteen."

After the success of a three months' trial with photo-charging at its Eltham library, **Woolwich** plan to adopt this method at two other libraries.

"A collection of 'throw-outs' from other branches" is the renewed criticism of the reference stock of **Fleet** (Hants.). Applauding the replacement of a 1956 Whitaker by the current edition, Fleet's critic observes that out of a stock of over 30 reference books published annually, Whitaker is the only current edition, and some of the others are 10 years old. The total absence of periodicals and daily papers is also deplored.

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I wonder whether part of the blurb from Robert Nathan's *So love returns*, quoted below, will delight you—and our colleagues generally—as much as it did me.

It reads: "There is a quality about this book that can only be savoured and appreciated by reading it."

Presumably, a filmed version will not do!

F. M. JORYSZ

## Caribbean Survey

A notable absentee from L.A. committee meetings at the end of the week and the full Council was **Mr. W. B. Paton**, the Hon. Secretary. Mr. Paton was flying to the Eastern Caribbean on a three-week survey of the libraries in that area. Prior to this trip he had been interviewed on Scottish T.V.

**Mr. D. C. Henrik Jones**, L.A. Librarian, has kindly agreed to remain in office for a further three months. This was at the express wish of the Council which was concerned at the loss of a valuable senior official of the Association so soon after that of Mr. Welsford.

## WELSH LIBRARY SCHOOL ?

Much of the work of the Education Committee was of a purely routine character or dealt with activities which were still undergoing investigation. There is only one major item to report and this resulted in a statement of general Council policy. This committee considered a resolution from the Wales and Monmouthshire Branch: "That the librarians in the Principality should start negotiations for the preparation of a school of librarianship under the auspices of the University of Wales, and that the Library Association be informed accordingly." This resolution was not supported as the Council's policy is to move towards fewer and larger schools of librarianship.

From September, 1959, a full-time course for the Final Examination will be offered by the **Newcastle School of Librarianship**. An additional member of staff is to be appointed.

## Dublin Flight

A party of 24 students and staff of the Manchester, Loughborough and Leeds Library Schools led by **Mr. J. C. Harrison**, flew to Ireland recently at the invitation of the Library Association of Ireland. The party arrived in Dublin on the 20th March and enjoyed a week full of visits to libraries, local beauty resorts, cultural centres and receptions, including one at the Mansion House by the acting Lord Mayor. There were radio and T.V. interviews and the visit obtained a great deal of favourable press publicity.

## PLASTIC JACKETS ENQUIRY

**Mr. J. S. Bristow** (Croydon) is compiling a "Consumer Research type of article" on the use of plastic jackets. He writes to ask librarians to send him samples of used jackets, together with details of suppliers' costs, number of issues and duration of use.

Any librarian who has had particularly good or bad service from any of the varied protective covers is invited to assist Mr. Bristow in investigating this undoubtedly important advance in book protection.

## "Our Town"—by Mr. Betjeman

The catalogue published in connection with an exhibition of nearly a thousand British guide books, at the National Book League's headquarters, contains some very frank comments by **Mr. John Betjeman**, who was a member of the selection committee.

"The publications by local authorities and commercial firms, with a few notable exceptions, are almost all deplorable," Mr. Betjeman writes. "This is extremely sad, because the craftsmanship, that is to say, colour-printing, monochrome printing and paper, are nearly always good and expensive, and one has the feeling that ratepayers' money and craftsmen's talent have been wasted in order to flatter the chamber of commerce, the town clerk and the borough surveyor." The books consist, he says, of "botched up balderdash copied out from previous brochures", and they pay no regard to the look of the town or village today.

### One Huge Rock Garden . . .

The illustrations no less than the text of the guide books are criticized by Mr. Betjeman, who refers to their "prussian blues and acidulated greens", and comments: "Most of these guides give the impression that England is one huge rock garden or bathing beach in perpetual sunlight, and that the only buildings worth seeing in a town are the technical college, the council chamber (1920 modern) with the mayor's insignia, the paddling pool in Victoria Park, the bandstand, the latest factory and the new housing estate."

The avowed intention of the exhibition is to raise the standard of British guide books.

## "Bibliotrain"

(with All Mod. Cons.)

For the past two years the S.E. Region of the French National Railways (S.N.C.F.) has been operating a "bibliotrain", a railway coach equipped as a mobile library. The coach serves 12,000 railwaymen and their families living in 26 centres on its circuit, which takes the bibliotrain 1,500 miles on a tour of 33 days.

Tilted mahogany shelves line the sides of the coach, leaving the centre clear for tables and chairs. A stock of 7,000 is carried, together with a small reference section and about two dozen periodicals. On a tour, anything between two and ten copies of most titles are carried to meet demands from the railway users, who may borrow two books at a time. Living accommodation for the librarian is air-conditioned and is provided with hot and cold water, radio, refrigerator and telephone.